Social Questions

BULLETIN

of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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General Conference Social Pronouncements

The first General Conference of the new Methodist Church, held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, April 2-May 6, 1940, adopted the following:

SOCIAL CREED RESTATEMENT
(in part)

"The Methodist Church aims to view the perplexing times and problems which we face today in the light of the teachings of Jesus. Jesus taught us to love our neighbors; and because we love them, we seek justice for them. We believe that to be silent in the face of need, injustice, and exploitation would be to deny Him. . . ."

"We stand for equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life; for the protection of both the individual and the family by the single standard of purity; for education for marriage, parenthood, and home-building; for proper housing, proper regulation of marriage, and uniform divorce laws. . . ."

"We believe that the industrial development which makes possible economic plenty for all, places upon men great moral responsibility in that the spiritual development of great masses of men is now needlessly hindered by poverty. We therefore stand for the abatement and prevention of poverty and the right of all men to live. We believe that it is our Christian duty to do our utmost to provide for all men opportunity to earn an adequate livelihood. Inasmuch as lack of significant employment tends to destroy human self-respect, we believe that workers must be safeguarded from enforced unemployment."

"We believe that we are under obligation as Christians to do all we can to provide training and employment for all our youth."

"We stand for the right of every individual and group of individuals to believe in and to advocate any peaceful method for the solution of any and all problems that may confront society. We stand upon the single principle of testing every such proposal in the light of the teachings of Jesus."

"We recommend that this Social Creed be read to our congregations at least once a year or placed in their hands in printed form. We further recommend that in every local church there shall be a committee to encourage the study of our Social Creed and to seek in every possible way to apply its principles."

Pacific School of Religion Berkeley, Calif.

CHURCH AND ECONOMICS

"Beyond (the Social Creed) some utterance naturally is called for from time to time. The Episcopal Address stated the issue in these words: 'In the exercise of its prophetic activities in the social sphere the Church has always laid emphasis upon three bases: First, the absolute obligation to good will as between man and men; second, the importance and worth of those relative elements in human contacts which make men and races different from one another—elements which are to be studied scientifically and dealt with according to the noblest social imagination; third, those social and religious factors which make for the larger and better ideals for men and the introduction of the ideals to more and more bases of social activity. It is a sad commentary on the Christianity of any Church if it has to wait on the progress of general social sentiment before it can preach finer ideals of human conduct. In all this realm the Church should seize and keep the initiative.'

"We would call attention to the fact that the economic problem which determines so largely the environment for the 'good life' has not been solved even after a decade of depression. A certain amount of pressure has been relieved by credits, public works, and war orders, but the basic problem is still with us. 'In the past year production in this country reached the same peak as in 1929, with the difference that in 1939 there were many more millions of the unemployed than in 1929.' As Church workers, we know what happens to the bodies, the minds, and the spiritual life of the unemployed and we know the effects upon those to whom the threat of unemployment holds mortal terror. We are not pleading primarily for or against any economic system. We are concerned about the good life for every child of God. Hence we insist that industrial leaders and social engineers meet human need through a scientific mastery of the economic problem. The Kingdom of God is not to be achieved or advanced by any retrogressive policies. We must go forward, . . . The best of the good old days were not good enough for every child of God. We would therefore encourage such experimentation as is the result of careful study and subject to intelligent control for the common good. We refuse to believe the problem to be beyond solution. Probably it will be solved ultimately by some form of social control which we do not now foresee. We believe a civilization capable of such achievements in other fields can also be successful here. We set ourselves to encourage and co-operate. In the meantime, we would approve the continuation and improvement of such relief

methods as will prevent human suffering. We would not have the multitudes sent away hungry."

AGGRESSOR NATIONS

"The awful plight of invaded nations appeals not only to the sympathy but to the conscience of mankind.

"We urge the government of the United States:

1. To extend such generous credits to such invaded nations as may be deemed possible, the same to be used for civilian relief and for physical and economic rehabilitation.

2. To extend the moral embargo on the shipment of war-making materials so as to include all aggressor nations and so as to include scrap iron, cotton, coffee, crude oil and all other war-making materials as well as machines to manufacture the same.

3. To insist by every possible diplomatic means upon the maintenance of the territorial integrity of such invaded nations."

PEACE

"The Church of Christ which transcends races, nations and classes has an all-important contribution to make to the abolition of war and to the establishment of a just and lasting peace. The Methodist Church, whose representatives are in every part of the earth, must make its full contribution to this great end. Therefore we urge all Methodists to:

"Recognize the fact that absolute loyalty belongs to God. . . .

"We endorse the judgment voiced at Oxford by the World Conference of the Universal Christian Council: 'Wars, the occasions of war, and all situations which conceal the fact of conflict under the guise of outward peace, are marks of a world to which the Church is charged to proclaim the Gospel of redemption. War involves compulsory enmity, diabolical outrage against human personality, and a wanton distortion of the truth. War is a particular demonstration of the power of sin in this world, and a defiance of the righteousness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. No justification of war must be allowed to conceal or minimize this fact.'

"Therefore, we stand upon this ground: The Methodist Church, although making no attempt to bind the consciences of its individual members, will not officially endorse, support or participate in war. We insist that the agencies of the Church shall not be used in preparation for war, but in the promulgation of peace. We insist that the buildings of the Church dedicated to the worship of God shall be used for that holy purpose, and not by any agency for the promotion of war.

"We have to recognize the fact that there is now no common judgment among Christians as to what a Christian should do when his own nation becomes involved in war. On this issue our own membership is divided. We believe, however, that the Christian Church, in a world torn asunder by bitter conflict, must not permit itself to be divided over any matter as to which it is possible for Christians sincerely to differ. We subscribe to this declaration of the Oxford Conference: 'Recognizing that its members are called to live within the secular state or nation, and that in the event of war a conflict of duties is inevitable, it (the Church) should help them to discover God's will, should then honor their conscientious decisions, whether they are led to participate in, or to abstain from, war, and maintain with both alike the full fellowship of the Body of Christ. It should call them to repent and to seek together that deliverance from the entangling evil which can be found in Christ alone.'

"Believing that 'in the long run any people have far more to gain by cherishing freedom of conscience than by any regimentation that takes away that freedom,' and that conscientious objection to war is a natural outgrowth of Christian desire for peace on earth, we ask and claim exemption from all forms of military preparation or service for all conscientious objectors who may be members of The Methodist Church. Those of our members who, as conscientious objectors, seek exemption from military training in schools and colleges or from military service anywhere or at any time have the authority and support of their Church.

"We request the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America to create a committee through which Protestant denominations that desire to do so may officially represent the interests of their conscientious objectors before the government of the United States. Also, we request the Federal Council to seek a method by which the spiritual ministry of the churches to the armed forces of the United States may be performed by ministers appointed and supported by, and amenable to, the Church."

ANTI-SEMITISM

"Anti-Semitism is one of the banners around which the anti-democratic forces are being rallied in the United States.

"We, therefore, call upon our fellow Christians and our Church organizations to expose the unChristian character of this propaganda, its nature and its sources, from pulpit and platform and on the air, in printed matter and by the passage of resolutions.

"We plead for the triumph of good will toward all races, religious faiths, and minority groups. We pledge ourselves to work for an enlightened and tolerant Americanism. In particular, we charge ourselves with the duty of endeavoring to eliminate race prejudice and race discrimination."

M. F. S. S.

A dinner meeting of the Methodist Federation for Social Service was held in Atlantic City on April 30, 1940, with over 300 people present. (Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam called this the largest number ever attending a General Conference Federation dinner.) Bishop Edgar Blake presided and Bishop Oxnam gave the invocation. The speakers included Bishop Francis J. McConnell and Bishop James C. Baker (excerpts from whose addresses follow), Rev. Charles C. Webber and Rev. Amos Horlacher.

BISHOP McCONNELL

Said Bishop Francis J. McConnell, president of the M.F.S.S. since 1912:

". . . . Anybody who has stood as close to the Federation as I have has increasing respect and admiration for it as the years go by, and that not because

of anything I have done, but because of the efficiency of the workers.

"This organization has lived a long time for a social organization of its kind. Almost all the others of a similar kind have gone out of business, unless they have had some big subsidy to carry them through, and organizations of this kind do not usually have subsidies. It has been going now since 1907 because of the loyalty of devoted friends that simply stick by it through thick and thin. . . .

"We have had people who stood by even when they didn't believe in us, and on a ridiculously small budget we managed to stir up more commotion for our size than any organization I know anything about.

"This organization has not exposed itself to any kind of legitimate criticism that was critical of statement of fact. For example, I do not know of any serious misstatement of fact in any of our publications since we began. Opinions are a different thing, of course. People can disagree there. . . .

"We have had our trials—all sorts of trials—but we have done some very wise things, and one of those wise things, and the only one I have insisted on, is never to get tied up with any official organization. We have been approached time and again and asked if we would join with this or that official church organization. Whenever the request was made to me I said, 'No,' because the minute you do that, and accept any kind of grant of any sort, you are tied and can't go on and do what you please.

"That isn't good advice for other organizations that ought to be more directly under the control of church public opinion. But we are commissioned to do an inspirational and educational and provocative work, and we can not be inspirational or educative unless we have some power to provoke. So we try to run ahead. . . .

FREE SPEECH

"I am greatly disturbed now lest our Federation people slip a little on this matter of free speech, because we are getting so intense about matters that we do not like to have an opponent talk. I have had the conservative come time and time again and say, 'You stop that man talking by the exercise of episcopal power.' I wouldn't do it if I could, and they know it.

"But I am getting a great deal of the other thing now. Men who are socially alert, even radicals—and quite far advanced radicals—come and want something done to shut off those who do not believe as they do. Take this peace question. I hope they are going to split up into arguing camps. Differing points of view are all right. But I trust that they are not going to waste their efforts denouncing one another. Then the whole peace movement will be discounted.

"Say anything, be as critical as you please, but don't let the element of bitterness enter in. . . .

"The way to really get things done is by knowing what the other people are doing, and by speaking up about it. . . .

"If the ministers will stand by one another we can get some things said. . . .

"In talking about fundamental things—regard for human rights and free speech and the ideals of the New Testament, we ought to stand by one another. . . . We must have forebearance and kindliness even if the views of others in our group aren't the kind of views we prefer or sympathize with. . . .

"The secret of apostolic strength was the way they stood by."

BISHOP BAKER

Long a member of the Executive Committee of the Federation, Bishop James C. Baker paid the M.F.S.S. the following tribute:

"I believe that the Methodist Federation is of enormous consequence in The Methodist Church. . . .

"Again and again I have people say to me outside of the Church that 'We do believe that The Methodist Church has a social awareness and a social sympathy, and is trying to find effective social methods to make a better world.' I wish that it were more true, vastly more true than it is. There is nothing that I am prouder of than statements of that sort which evidence a faith in The Methodist Church and an expectancy likewise from The Methodist Church.

"The Methodist Federation for Social Service is more responsible for that than anything else in the life of our Church. I go back to the beginning of my own ministry, or near the beginning of my ministry when this Federation began, and I cannot overstate what it meant to me as a young minister to have the reenforcement of this Federation. Among those who helped to steady my own courage and to give me faith in the possibility of a growing kingdom of brotherhood were men like Frank Mason North, Harry Ward, Francis J. McConnell.

"Now we need to have in our Methodism an organization of this sort which will continue to voice the social purpose and passion of the Church and to stimulate it.

"The Methodist Federation can help to sharpen the conscience and increase the intelligence and build a comradeship in the attempt to really make our gospel effective in the life of our time.

"If the gospel does not make a difference in the life of our time, then I myself do not think that the gospel is of much consequence. The Methodist Federation is of first importance in the life of our Church, and I hope that we will help to make possible its continuance in a large way. . . .

CONFESSION OF FAITH

"I had a letter by chance this morning from a friend whom I have known for a good many years, who is now nearing the end of his ministry. He has been a member of this Federation from the very beginning, and here is a paragraph out of his letter:

" 'My flag is still unfurled for all things that seem to me to stand for the rights of the weak against the mighty. I am not afraid of what they call me. I have only fear that I may not be true to Him whom I count the captain of my soul. To liberate those who are imprisoned in mind, soul and body is still my purpose.'

"That was his confession of faith. That is my confession of faith. I believe that if we could come to the end of our ministry and look unashamed into the face of the captain of our souls, having sought through our ministry to help to bring freedom of mind and of body to all our fellows, all around the world, then we could look into His face unashamed and humbly ask for His benediction upon us."

News from the Field

New York East Conference. War. The resolutions against aggression, adopted May 20, 1940, after listing the invasions of Finland, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, declared:

"These invasions are without any justification in international law and are utterly abhorrent to all civilized concepts of international justice and action. This Conference condemns the invasion of these countries as utterly unchristian, as basically inhuman, unlawful, and unjust, and as worthy only of complete abhorrence and detestation." The conviction of the Conference that our country should not become involved in the European conflict was voiced as follows: "We call upon the ministers and people of our churches to keep cool in a fevered time in the firm belief that an America which keeps out of war can in the long run best rid the world of war and promote a just and lasting peace."

New York East Conference. Race. "We ask that the Board of Hospitals and Homes of the Methodist Church increase its efforts to provide Negro youth with wider opportunities for professional training, without discrimination, in Methodist institutions.

"And we express our disapproval to the Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals, in regard to the situation created by the Methodist Building in Washington, D. C., leasing space to a cafeteria which discriminates against Negro patronage."

New York Conference on April 8, 1940, adopted this resolution:

"Whereas, the United States has for the past two years and more been supplying Japan with 54 per cent. of her war materials, which she has been using to conquer China, having already caused the death of approximately 3,500,000 Chinese and rendered homeless 11,000,000 others, and

"Whereas, America ought not to continue to be a partner of Japan in such aggressive warfare upon China, to which we have sent so many missionaries and contributed so much money for religious, educational and social service purposes,

"Resolved, That we ask the Congress to pass the necessary legislation to embargo the sale and shipment of all war materials to Japan."

Charles C. Webber, while attending the General Conference at Atlantic City, introduced Memorials dealing with the Dies Committee, Anti-Semitism, the Federal Anti-lynching Bill, the National Labor Relations Act, the Federal Housing Bill, the W.P.A., the labor and race situation at Dining Room, Inc. (a restaurant located in our Methodist Building at Washington, D. C.), and the labor situation in the Methodist Publishing House at Nashville, Tenn.

Since General Conference he has given addresses at the New York East, Northern New York, and New England Southern Conferences, and before the Committee on Social Education of the Troy Conference. On June 9-16 he will serve on the faculty of the Student Christian Movement Conference at Eagles Mere, Pa.

M.F.S.S. Dinner. Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference, Atlantic City, N. J., June 20, 5:30 P.M., Hotel Madison. Speaker, Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam. Subject, "The Function of the Federation in a Time of Crisis."

The Crisis

Federation Members: Have we cried wolf! wolf! once too often? Our appeals for funds would seem to indicate that we have. That our Federation is and has been going through financial difficulties is certainly not news to our members. But few seem to realize that the tired old wolf that has been howling at our door is about to have his place taken over by a first-class lion who means business—a lion in the form of a $1,650 debt (by October 1, 1940)!

Unless you respond to our call for help at once this lion will tear the vitals out of the Federation. It will make it necessary to drop our Executive and Field Secretary, leaving no one in the Field to carry on our educational and "forward" program; and leaving the administration of the Federation dependent upon such volunteer assistance as can be secured from the busy lives of Federation members in and around New York.

Furthermore, if the members do not rally, there is a possibility that the entire work of the Federation may have to be given up.

Must we as a group of liberal-minded ministers and laymen confess that after thirty-three years of prophetic service to the Church, our Federation cannot depend on us to keep it going as a vital force in this time of stress and bewilderment?

The acuteness of our financial situation demands that you act immediately.

1. Send in your dues or a sizable contribution or both.
2. Pledge yourself to raise money in your church or elsewhere before the summer vacation starts.

I appeal to you to act at once!

AMOS B. HORLACHER,
Chairman, National Finance Committee

See the South

Fifth Annual Traveling Economic Seminar of the Religion and Labor Foundation. July 2-31. Leader—Charles C. Webber.

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